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ABSTRACT

The issues and problems associated with transferring from one educational institution to another have existed for some time. This article repports on developments that may increase the flexibility and improve the efficiency of college-university transfer. Following a discussion of the numbers, types, and problems of transfer students, emphasis is placed on efforts to facilitate the transfer process. These efforts include: (1) institutionalization of the process through committees, conferences, and periodic reports; (2) state transfer policies; and (3) private college transfer programs. Additional areas of concern that accompany an awareness of the transfer situation are discussed including: the special needs of military students and transfer of credit of vocational, technical, or career courses from a 2-year or proprietary institution. (Author/MJM)

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Research Currents

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NEW DEVELOPMENTS IN COLLEGE TRANSFER
by David A. Trivett

Although the issues and problems associated with transferring from one educational institution to another have existed for some time, work toward their solution is now critically important to higher education. Hierarchical state models for higher education depend on a smooth flow of students between institutions; the number of community college students seeking to transfer is ever increasing; and the problems faced by transfer students are qualitatively different from those of freshmen (Willingham 1972, pp. 2-3). Numerous problems complicate the transfer relationship. Procedural admissions complexities, inadequate orientation, and diverse academic standards are encountered in the move from an open door college to a more selective institution (pp. 20-23). The student faces the persistent question of how much credit he will be granted by the institution to which he transfers (p. 27). If the social purpose of a system of junior-senior colleges is to increase access to a college degree, are we certain students are actually achieving that objective (p. 30)? Some transfer students encounter a shortage of financial aid or inadequate space at senior institutions — a reflection of lack of commitment from the state (pp. 33-36). Willingham believes that "institutionalization of the process; that is, clear, routine machinery in the form of committees, conferences, and periodic reports" will lead to more effective articulation and, through it, access by transfer (p. 37).

Kintzer (1973b) describes the role of the community college in the transfer-access chain as that of a "middleman." For the middleman to work so that students move successfully through the educational system rather than just in and out, clear working agreements must exist between institutions. These agreements must be backed with communication, flexibility, and wholehearted support for admission through transfer (pp. 1-2). Community college faculty argue that pressures from senior institutions and the specifications of some state agreements restrict their right to construct distinctive programs for students who will later transfer. Other impediments to transfer allegedly employed at senior colleges include: "refusing to accept occupational courses which, in fact, may have value for baccalaureate degrees . . . putting limitations on the amount of credit granted in certain fields . . . insisting on detailed community college course investigation and an exact equivalence of courses . . . not providing orientation programs for the transfer student," and many others (p. 27). Kintzer describes in detail the many articulation agreements within states across the nation that he hopes "may increase the flexibility and improve the efficiency of two-year/four-year college-university transfer" (p. 33).

THE STUDENT IN THE MIDDLE

Many of the long-standing transfer issues have an impact on the student who is trying to transfer. As the postsecondary student population becomes more mobile and diverse, transfer problems will increase (Kintzer 1974a, pp. 77-79). Community college transfers to senior institutions are expected to compete in an unfamiliar environment and, lacking knowledge of university procedures, may feel handicapped (p. 96). Students surveyed by Kintzer expressed dissatisfaction with the counseling and "lack of orientation plans at both junior and senior institutions (pp. 102-103).

Minority students have often failed to complete a bachelor's degree program after being encouraged to aspire to it by the flexibility, low cost, and commitment of a community college. Smith describes a program at Merritt College designed to hold more students in transfer programs. Professional counseling, peer counseling at receiving colleges, pre-enrollment programs, and special resource materials have tripled the number of fulltime day students going to four-year schools from Merritt College (Smith 1973, pp. 21-22).

When they arrive at the big university, transfers have needs similar to those of freshmen students and commuters.

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Houmes and others found that transfers rank these "entry level concerns" in much the same way freshmen do. The differences reported seem understandable: transfers list "transferability of credit" high among their concerns, freshmen rank "study skills" high on their list. "Advisement" is number one on both lists (Houmes et al. 1973, pp. 3-4).

The need for financial aid may be one of the immediate problems a transfer student faces; college efforts to recruit transfer students may not be matched by sufficient financial aid. Van Dusen (1974) offers data to suggest that there is a difference between stated policy and actual practice in the awarding of financial aid to transfer students. He scrutinized "Student Resource Surveys" completed by students at more than 300 postsecondary institutions. Transfer students from community colleges appear to have a greater need for aid, but they generally receive less aid than do native students (those who remain at four-year schools from the freshman year on) (p. 18). Awards based on federal criteria are more equitable for transfer students than those based on local policy (p. 20).

If a student has attended a school where nontraditional grading practices are an option, he may find upon transferring that only a portion of his record will be utilized if he has been evaluated with nontraditional methods. Stevens recommends that schools using grading methods such as "high pass-pass-no record," "pass-fail," and "credit-no credit," should be prepared to assist the students who are planning to transfer by issuing comprehensive letters and annotated grade reports (Stevens 1973, pp. 308, 312).

NUMBERS AND TYPES OF TRANSFERS

The exact number of students who transfer in a given year is elusive. Van Alstyne claims that "in recent years one out of every four entering full-time freshmen has eventually transferred . . . " (Van Alstyne 1974, p. 128). Willingham offers the rough estimate that transfers number 600,000 annually (Willingham 1974, p. 39).

System-wide figures are instructive. In New York, 21,697 transfer students enrolled in the fall of 1972 at State University (SUNY) institutions. Sixty percent enrolled in senior institutions and 40 percent of the transfers enrolled in two-year colleges (*Application and Enrollment Patterns . . .*, p. ix). Some 11,105 students transferred among Alabama institutions of higher education in the fall and summer of 1972. Twenty-seven percent transferred from senior to senior, 29 percent from junior to senior, 26 percent from other states to senior and 10 percent from senior to junior (compiled from *Student Flow Summer and Fall Terms . . .*, *ad passim*). In North Carolina, undergraduate transfers to public senior institutions increased 11.8 percent from fall 1972 to 1973 while total undergraduate enrollment increased 3.2 percent (Davis and Balfour 1974, pp. 43, 53). Transfers into public community colleges increased 11.2 percent whereas enrollment increased only 2.5 percent (p. 44, 53).

It is now recognized that there are more than two categories of transfer. Willingham names seven different types of transfer, including the "reverse transfer," the "open door transfer," and the "double reverse transfer" (Willingham 1974, pp. 39-46).

Among the categories, the reverse transfer has attracted recent attention. One study examines the vocational and educational plans of these students who transfer from four-year colleges to two-year institutions, exploring why they transferred, their satisfactions, their goals. Observing that most of the students in the study planned to return to four-year colleges for bachelor's degrees, Kuznik (1972) asserts that the reverse transfer usually becomes more successful and realistic because of his transfer experience (pp. 425-428). Sufficient numbers of reverse transfers occur for McCandless and Pope (1974) to be curious about the admission practices of two-year colleges affecting students trying to transfer from four-year colleges while on academic suspension. Basing their study on all the accredited junior and senior colleges in Texas, they found that most (79 percent) of the respondents would accept students on academic suspension from other educational institutions (p. 180).

A CURRENT IMPROVEMENT EFFORT

The Association Transfer Group, formed in 1972, considers issues colleges face while trying to accommodate transfer students. A conference held at Airlie House in December 1973 probed the question: "How can the policies and practices in postsecondary education be modified to accommodate better the needs of students who, in increasing numbers, transfer from one institution to another?" (*College Transfer*, 1974, p. 1). Recommendations from the conference are addressed to faculties, administrators, and state agencies. A major conclusion reached at the conference was that:

> Changes in policy and practice most beneficial to transfer ("itinerant") students will result from establishing the transfer student on an equitable basis with the native student; providing the student exact and full information necessary to his academic progress, and providing the counseling that must accompany it, both on an institutional and an areawide basis; improving or devising means in addition to course completion for assessing competence and awarding credit (p. 2).

Numerous working papers from the conference explore issues in transferring. Furniss and Martin (1974) see college transfer in the light of a social mission to give access to postsecondary education to all. The current approach differs because a variety of institutions are expected, through open procedures, to provide the opportunity to all qualified students without arbitrary restrictions. Certain questions arise: How will institutions accommodate the range of aptitude encountered or evaluate educational experiences from nontraditional sources such as proprietary schools? How can those schools that stress nonintellectual components of their environments absorb students who have not been equivalently "socialized" (pp. 8-15)?

Willingham (1974) picks up the aptitude-access issue pointing out that "student bodies vary greatly in ability regardless of formal admission policy. Rational institutional policy regarding movement of transfer students must take that variation into proper account if higher education as a whole is to serve the public interest" (p. 27). In monitoring academic standards while encouraging movement of students, use of the traditional grade-point average of students inadequately reflects differences in institutional standards. Alternate means include adjusted grades, standardized examinations, competency standards, and automatic admission arising from accreditation (pp. 27-38).

Ill-perceived attitudes may contribute to difficulties encountered in transfer relations. Too much faith may be placed in the sequential, cumulative quality of knowledge to be gained from a particular program, thereby permitting the

dismissal of a student's previous learning. Dearing (1974) suggests that an answer lies in recognition of smaller units of learning, such as modules, that could be plugged into programs with similar elements. The actual learning experience and achievement of individual transfer students should serve as the focus of quality evaluation, rather than the assumed caliber of the institution a student transfers from (pp. 50-60).

STATE TRANSFER POLICIES

Transfer issues and problems are important in many states. In his most recent up-date (1974b) of his earlier treatise (1973b) on state articulation agreements, Kintzer asserts that the development of statewide agreements continues; guidelines on credit, course, and program articulation are replacing the accommodation of students as major items. Realism and flexibility are important qualities in state agreements if the resultant transfer policies are to accommodate nontraditional students and encourage the survival of private institutions (Kintzer 1974b, pp. 1-3).

Examples of state articulation-transfer agreements are available. In Florida, the State Articulation Coordinating Committee provides a continuous revision of the original articulation agreement (*State Articulation Coordination Committee* . . . 1974, pp. ii, 1). In North Carolina, guidelines for the transfer of credit have been "prepared voluntarily for voluntary use by representatives of colleges and universities which carefully guard their admission independence . . . ," while recognizing a need for "common reference points" (*Guidelines for Transfer* 1973, p. 3). The Massachusetts Transfer Review Council was established in 1971 "to foster improved student mobility among institutions of higher education" (*Policy for Facilitating* . . . 1972, p. 1). Its initial report, recently approved by leaders of higher education in Massachusetts, is limited to the mobility of students transferring from two-year colleges to upper division institutions but has broad implications:

> Throughout public higher education in the Commonwealth an associate degree from any community college signatory to the Commonwealth Transfer Compact will be honored as a unit and construed as: (1) completion of at least 60 hours of work toward a baccalaureate degree, and (2) completion of at least 33 credit hours toward fulfillment of the general education requirements for the baccalaureate degree. Further, all associate degree holders accepted for transfer under the Compact will be subject to no special requirements beyond those specified as major department and/or graduation requirements for students who originally enrolled in the receiving institution as freshman (p. 4).

The Board of Trustees of the State University of New York has adopted a policy guaranteeing a space for two-year college graduates with A.A. or A.S. degrees. While the policy facilitates the completion of degrees by transfer students, it also specifies that students should be discouraged from seeking to transfer prior to completion of an associate degree (Boyer 1973, n.p.).

In numerous instances, state policy toward transfer has been expressed through the creation of upper division colleges. For example, in Illinois an alternative system exists with 47 community colleges and teaching centers and two upper-division-graduate universities, Sangamon State and Governors State. Because the upper division colleges are independent of other senior institutions, they can operate with open admissions and control their own curriculum, tailoring it to transfer graduates of the community colleges (Giesecke 1973, n.p.).

THE PRIVATE COLLEGE RESPONSE

Transfer students can provide the stimulus of new blood and money to private institutions; consequently, traditional private universities have developed special outreach programs to encourage transfer students. American University (Washington, D.C.) and Hamline University (St. Paul, Minnesota) independently established transfer programs that share certain features. Using grant money, these institutions called attention to their welcome for transfers. Publicity has been backed with special program offices that offer counseling and cut through red tape. Changes in curriculum or degree programs have accompanied the invitations. In each case, the transfer students have had an impact on the campuses. At Hamline, faculty and native students have responded enthusiastically to the new students who are more likely to be vets, or parents, or working students — that is, nontraditional students.[1] At American University, enrollment projections for transfers are up, direct agreements for transfer have been signed with community and junior colleges, and numerous structural and program changes have been accelerated through the transfer program stimulus (Van Kloberg 1974).

LOOSENING UP

Most of the previous topics have reflected evolutions in long-standing transfer practices. There are other new practices and thinking that accompany a loosening-up and awareness of the transfer situation.

The mobility and maturity of servicemen create trials in putting together an educational program. Servicemen's Opportunity College is a network of institutions aligned to respond to the special needs of military students. In addition to offering more liberal policies regarding resident credit and evaluation of experience for credit, participating institutions are obligated to practice a "generous" transfer policy (*Servicemen's Opportunity College* 1974, pp. 5-6, 45-47).

Another issue yet to be resolved concerns the transfer of vocational, technical, or career courses from two-year and proprietary institutions. Although Kintzer (1973a) finds that senior institutions are becoming more flexible in granting credit for work taken in industry-run technical schools (p. 37), Willingham (1974) reports that few occupational program students in community colleges apply to transfer to senior institutions and "a large proportion of such applications are rejected" (p. 44)

Rethinking of an aspect of this problem is occurring in South Carolina. Previously, students with A.A.S. degrees from technical education centers either had to begin again as freshmen or transfer out of state in order to pursue more higher education. Transfer of credit was blocked. A recent Commission on Higher Education committee report has stimulated change and argues that "equivalency" evaluations of courses should be based on the value of course content to an area of knowledge rather than on the usual basis of similarity to courses in the receiving institution (Krech 1973, pp. 1-3). Similar thought elsewhere might suggest solutions for the technical credit transfer problem.

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[1]Conversation with Thomas Courtice, Hamline University June 26, 1974.

CONCLUSIONS

Few of the long-standing transfer issues delineated by Willingham and Kintzer are presently resolved and the numbers and types of transfer students are increasing. To approach the goal of access to postsecondary education through transfer requires the continuous discussion of questions such as how to accommodate a span of student aptitude at selective institutions, how to keep nontraditional students in programs, how to equalize financial aid inequities, and how to weigh knowledge from experience, from the military, or from proprietary schools. Progress shows through efforts like the Airlie House Conference and Servicemen's Opportunity College. Successful moves are also underway to individualize the response of institutions to transfer students through counseling and special programs. However, full justice for transfer students and open movement between institutions await an explanation of what the educating experience really is, i.e., a theory to permit the credited exchange of individual educational accomplishment regardless of its source.

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